1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

844 husband's mother (whether uterine or classificatory) to attend the labour of her daughter-in-law. The husband does not attend. As Mr. Hambly's informant phrased it, 'The child would be ashamed to be born.'[1] It seems that the husband's non-attendance may be
●845 connected with the danger to him of the blood.[2] No other man will be present unless delayed labour entails the intervention of a medical practitioner, especially a diviner. Resort will not be had to outside aid until it seems impossible otherwise for the child to be born, and nowadays even where modern medical aid is available, often it will only be resorted to after the woman has been in labour for more than twenty-four hours[3]—sometimes much more, and then when it is already too late. Difficult delivery may be caused by:

(*a*) *Broken taboos*, as, for example, theft, either by the mother or the father. Only after confession can someone go out and steal something, after which the child 'consents' to be born.

(*b*) *Adultery* on the part of the mother, which must be confessed before the child will 'consent' to be born. The father's adultery may also cause trouble at this time, but this is more often believed to be the cause of a disease in his offspring known as *onjamba*. Failing confession of the above faults, a diviner may be called, but his diagnosis may more often indicate

(*c*) *Sorcery*, to which difficult labour, along with many other ills of life, may be attributed.[4]

(*d*) It is also believed that in some cases a woman may herself refuse to give birth and may extend her pregnancy far beyond the nine months' period, the limits of which, and its method of reckoning, are not understood. Such cases as

[1] Hambly, op. cit., p. 185.

[2] Among church-members the husband often attends the birth and is sometimes the only attendant.

[3] A labour of twelve or fourteen hours is considered quite usual, and a shorter one as light.

754 [4] Sorcery, together with ill will and anger recognized as its principal roots, are great dangers to a woman giving birth. Anyone who dislikes the woman in labour, or even one who has ever shown ill will against her, will stay strictly away from the birth. While a woman is in labour all women of the village are expected to stay at home and refrain from ordinary activities—to commune with the spirits. As one of many proverbs has it: *Ukuenu nda o cita, vu salela: oku cita kukuenu, oku cita kuove*; 'Your fellow, if she gives birth, you stay in: childbirth of your fellow, is childbirth of yours.'

(538)

1: Childs M-S (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

have come to my notice finally turned out to be fibroid tumours, but it is held that there are women who have extended their periods of pregnancy to two years and then had normal deliveries. I failed to learn what was gained or intended by this procedure.

It is not to be inferred that difficult deliveries or prolonged labour are the rule, for while they do occur, they are rather the exception. In 1857 Magyar observed that 'women . . . are . . . very fecund and except in few cases bear happily the pains of childbirth'.[1] Such a statement would now have to be classed as a bit optimistic, but it has its point, speaking comparatively with our own society in mind. During labour the woman usually kneels, but in some regions she stands holding on to a post which the husband has put into the floor of the hut for this purpose.[2] 'With the breaking of the foetal bag the baby, which has been in the warmth, feels the air and begins to cry, *Ña, ña, ña.*'[3] From this cry is derived the word for baby, *oñaña.*

Hereupon I turn to the general narrative:

'When the mother recognizes that her time for giving birth has come, if this is her first,[4] she tells her husband to call the elder women who are skilled in causing to give birth. When the baby is born they arrange to cut (the cord of) the navel. First they tie it up with a piece of rag just picked up in the house or from the refuse heap, then they pick up a porridge-stick or a piece of firewood over which they stretch the cord and cut it with a knife[5] (which has not been boiled, for they do not arrange beforehand the cloths of the navel nor the knives for cutting as do Europeans). Everything they look for after the baby has already come. The knife and the porridge-stick they tie up to the roof of the house and

[1] Magyar, *Reisen in Süd-Afrika*, p. 283 (foot of page).

[2] e.g. in Civula. The Umbundu hut, whether round or rectangular, has no central pole. Does this custom indicate that in former times there was a central pole?

[3] From a statement of an old woman at Ndondi, other parts of which have been incorporated in the general narrative. She also stated that ordinarily a baby was not 'received', but was born on to the floor of the hut. From other informants and from the observations of my wife, I think this is the case only when a woman is alone and has no attendants (q.v. *infra*).

[4] Lit., if she is *omunua*, i.e. one who has not yet given birth.

[5] Hambly's note that a hoe is used to cut a girl's cord and an arrow to cut a boy's is 'theoretically' or symbolically correct, but nowadays people do not bother to follow the symbolism unless convenient (Hambly, *op. cit.*, p. 284).

1: Childs M-S (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

the fire, while no one was looking. Before going on to that period, the narrative will tell a little about the birth of

Twins (Olonjamba).[1] 'If twins are born, when they have finished cutting (the cords of) the navels they bury their placentas out of doors at a cross-road. After washing and anointing them with oil, they shout saying, *Ulú! Ulú! Ulú!* There have come here a man and a woman. When the people come, they begin while yet outside (the hut), to curse[2] (and continue) until they enter, cursing the parents. It is called *Ongombo*, The Diviner's Basket. In that way such children are followed about by all, that none of them may die. And all the time that such children are growing, it is done month by month. The parent comes out and begins to curse the people who are in the village, and then all come from their houses and follow cursing her.'

In the case of triplets, when they are weaned, one is given to the king.[3]

As soon as the midwives have finished their task, the father may come in and take up the child, but men do not 'like' to hold a child which is still 'red' (i.e. not yet black) and whose neck is not yet 'strong'. Should a woman abort (*pulumuisa*), or should the child be stillborn or die at birth, the loss is accepted philosophically, quoting the proverb:

Cïnene ombenje akolovi hacimueko.
The main thing (is) the gourd jug, the shavings (are) nothing.

Should the mother also die, then they quote:

Ollüsi ka kuatele, ocimanga ca enda lovava.
A fish (he) did not catch, the bracelet went with water.

Should a young woman complain that her baby is too small, the others may remind her:

Esaila olio osanji.
The egg that (is) the chicken.

Should she complain that her baby does not grow properly, they will say:

Ka ci kuli omõlã ombia, omõlã omunu o kula
It does not grow the child of (a) pot, (the) child of (a) person grows.

[1] Lit., Elephants. The reference is to the names given to twins: *Njamba* (Elephant), *Hosi* (Lion), or *Ngove* (Hippopotamus).
[2] *Tukõlã*, which literally meant to call *hard* names.
[3] I know of one such case in Civaka.

683 One of the commonest forms of punishment for sorcery was, and still is, banishment. Only the chief could pronounce the death penalty. Charges of sorcery are sometimes brought today to civil courts and to church courts under the guise of "poisoning".(1)

781 There are obvious gaps in the information on Unbundu religion and magic e.g. on spirits other than those of ancestors; on ritual connected with the ancestors; on productive and protective magic; on the work of the medicine-man as distinct from the diviner, and on the functions of the two separate offices of family priest. From existing accounts, however, Unbundu magico-religious concepts would appear to have much in common with those of the peoples to the east of the Plateau, and many of the words used for these concepts (*ngombo, ohambo, wanga, ngango* e.g.) are in fact the same. These peoples have been described in another section of the Survey.(2)

THE LIFE CYCLE

852 Childs' chapters on infancy, childhood, and adolescence form the main part of his book, and his treatment of the subject is much more detailed and on a deeper level than information offered by other writers,(3) and should be consulted.

BIRTH

844 A woman remains in her husband's village for the birth of her children. During the first birth, she is generally assisted by older women of the village, usually relatives of the husband. No man is present unless delayed labour entails the presence of a medical practitioner, or a diviner. Difficult delivery is said to be caused by broken taboos, adultery on the part of the mother, sorcery, or the woman's own refusal to give birth. There is little ceremony connected with childbirth, and a woman may give birth to her second and later children alone when she is in the fields. There is a customary lying-in period until the cord falls from the navel, but this is frequently ignored today.

845 Twins are welcomed but are considered prodigies whose birth requires the administrations of an ocimbanda.(4) Soon after the birth, and every month while the children are growing, the whole village takes part in a ceremony to preserve their lives. In the case of triplets, one is given to the paramount chief.(5)

553 Naming usually takes place, in the case of a first-born, on the day of its birth. Childs notes several factors:

(a) The name (*onduko*) should have been borne by a relative, whether living or dead, whose character and state of well-being are satisfactory; sometimes the child may be considered the re-incarnation of the deceased relative after whom he is named.†

(1) Childs, personal communication. (2) McCulloch, 1951, pp.72-83.
(3) Hambly, (2) 1934, pp.212-33, and Cushman, 1944.
(4) Ennis, 1945. (5) Childs, 1949, p.83.

† [Childs, op. cit., p. 87-]

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

straight lines. The legs show the usual flexion of the knees and a shortening which is out of proportion to the body length. The lower limbs of most Angolan figures have these characteristics. The body of this figure is hollow and the head detachable. The incised headdress is imitative of the coiffure of Vachokue women. 532

Cangamba, a village in eastern Angola, is a confluence of tribal elements, namely, Vambuella, Luchazi, Babunda, and Vachokue, whose physical appearance, hairdressing, tooth mutilation, and tribal marks differ considerably. The man who sold the figurine brought it furtively. He was an Ocimbundu, but the work is of Chokue origin. The figure, I am informed, was filled with medicine, then placed near a patient who was undergoing curative treatment. 171 [755]

The figurine (*ngesa*) of a woman having a number of dark feathers attached to her back has only one use. A caravan setting out for a long journey is accompanied by a medicine-man whose outfit includes such a figurine. Should the caravan leader be in doubt when choosing between two paths, the medicine-man sets up the image at the parting of the ways. He kneels before it and asks questions, then plugs his nostrils in order to make replies in a falsetto voice supposed to come from the figurine. Thus advised respecting the route to follow, the caravan continues its journey (Plate XXI, Fig. 5; p. 156). 484 778 787

The wooden figure (Plate XXI, Fig. 3) is of exceptional interest because of its connection with the blacksmith's craft, which is associated with introductory rites for apprentices. In former days a newly initiated blacksmith was expected to disappear for a period during which he killed a man. On returning to the work of his forge the blacksmith made a wooden figure of which this example, one of five obtained, is typical. The spirit of the murdered man took up its abode in the effigy and in this way helped with the work. The figure, which is of the usual dimensions, namely, 36 cm high, has the greater part of its surface covered with reddened earth (pp. 159–160). 326 775

Two figurines (Plate XXI, Figs. 1, 6) were obtained from women of the Vachokue tribe in the village of Ngongo, Ngalangi. Here the Vachokue and the Ovimbundu mingle to such an extent that customs are no doubt transferred from one culture to the other. These wooden images are used by childless women, or by women whose infants have died. The woman who sold these figures pressed them to her breasts to show the manner of use. People standing around smiled and nodded their approval. A wooden figure of this kind is substituted for a dead twin. 171 842 [845]

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

of this symbolism relating to occupations of males and females respectively, is obvious. 842

Many women bear children when they are away in the fields, but help at home is often given. The mothers of the wife and of the husband may not be present at the confinement. No childless woman may be near during the confinement or convalescence. The father may not be present or "the child would be ashamed to be born." Before and during her pregnancy a woman feeds her husband with a prickly plant which is mixed in his food; this makes him faithful to her. 844 [784]

The abdomen is bound after delivery in order to keep the uterus in position. There is a very small amount of bleeding after childbirth; in fact the flow of blood is quite finished in two or three days. The nearer the diet comes to that of the white man the greater the bleeding at delivery. A pregnant woman may not beat a drum, or she will bear a drum. A woman who sees the blood from circumcision of a male will not have any children.

When a female child is born, the umbilical cord is cut with a hoe to ensure that the female will be a good worker in the field. The cord of a male is cut with an arrow to insure good hunting. A newly born child receives a drink of beer, and a cord is tied round its waist. This is not for support; it is the string from which, much later, the lower garment hangs. Girls do not menstruate until they are fifteen or even seventeen years of age. During the months after first menstruation a girl advances rapidly from childhood to womanhood. 841

The medicines that women take to secure abortions are bitter. A woman will refuse quinine because she thinks it will cause abortion. 847 It is certain that twins are welcome among the Ovimbundu, but there are special observances connected with their birth and death. A twin birth is not thought to imply dual fatherhood. Twins are called Njamba ("elephant") and Hosi ("lion"). Although twins are of opposite sexes each receives one of the two names. Njamba is the first born, and Hosi is the second to be delivered. The medicine-man holds a ceremony to cure the mother of twins. The afterbirth of twins is placed in two gourds and carried outside the village for burial by two midwives. The mother of twins must wear round her neck the horn of an antelope given by the medicine-man. She has to blow this when crossing a river, meeting a crowd of people, or seeing a hawk overhead. People laugh at her and in fun say that she is a pig or a bitch. "The woman says the same kind of words to them." Children may be adopted, but they never really 845 597

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

597 belong to the foster parents. When an adopted girl marries, half the presents from the husband are given to the natural parents, and the other half to the foster parents.

●845 In a case of triple birth at Ngalangi two infants died at birth; the other succumbed after three months. In another instance a woman bore three children and in the vernacular of my informant "something which was nothing," but all died. In a third case of triple birth a woman had a boy and two girls. The boy died at the age of fifteen [826] years; the girls grew up and bore children. Albinos do not find it easy to obtain wives. I was told that an albino man at Ngalangi could not find a wife until he married a widow who had several children, because unmarried girls of his own age did not want him. One of the charms collected has to be worn by a woman who has triplets. The object is a rattle (*olusangu*), which the woman shakes when she meets any one. If she gave an ordinary greeting the children would die.

115 The greater part of this information was obtained at Ngalangi by interrogating women who were questioned in Umbundu by Mrs. McDowell. At Elende I asked my interpreter Ngonga to interrogate 843 his wife. According to Ngonga a woman must visit a female practitioner in the first month of her pregnancy. The face and the body of the pregnant woman are painted with red, black, and white spots. This means that she will have no difficulty in bearing children, neither will she have any sickness during the nine months of gestation. "When her belly hurts" (i.e., the quickening), the woman goes to the same female *ocimbanda*, who paints lines of white, red, and black across her breast.

751 The *ocimbanda* gives the woman a necklace consisting of a strip of leather to which two cowries are attached. Experience proves that such a necklace is difficult to buy. If the woman has a necklace of this kind which was worn by her grandmother, it is a very powerful aid to conception, a relief in painful menstruation, and a means of securing easy delivery and normal gestation. I could not find any trace of an idea relating to the entry of a soul, ancestral or otherwise, into the foetus.

841 *Ongandu* is the name for a disease of the genitalia; but Ngonga used the word to describe abdominal pain suffered by a woman who has had no children. By this I suppose he means painful menstruation. The curative root which is given is called *kayambua*.

847 Abortion is never secured by mechanical means. The medicine (*ihemba*) is made from the root of a plant that is boiled in water and

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

drunk. The concoction is described in Umbundu as *themba viaku tundisapo imo* ("medicine to take away belly"). 847

When the monthly period begins too early in life, the medicine-man recommends that the young girl should wear the cowrie necklace worn by her mother's mother. 841

A deformed child is destroyed, but not if it has been allowed to survive the first day. 847

If male triplets are born, two stay permanently with the mother. At the age of five years one child goes to the king, whose child he becomes. 851

When a woman has had relationships with more than one man, she will die in childbirth unless the medicine-man is called to cure her. 837

In a Vachokue village of eastern Angola I bought a female wooden figure. It was explained that this would be nursed by a woman, one of whose twins was dead, in order to induce another conception. Moreover, the nursing of the figure prevents the death of the second twin. The Ovimbundu also use these wooden figurines for replacing dead twins (p. 163). 532 845 842

Children are suckled for a long time; even those of three years and older come to the breast. There are instances in which milk is present but lacking the nutritive qualities; then the baby is likely to die. The matter is simpler when a mother gives no milk at all because the baby is given to another woman, but not necessarily to a woman who is suckling a child. A baby whose mother has no milk may be given to a woman who has not borne a child for many years, and the sucking of the child quickly induces a milk supply. This is agreed upon by informants at Ngalangi and Elende who have seen a child nursed by a woman with withered breasts. Protection is given to the fontanelle by covering it with a vegetable gum which hardens. 853

Near the chief village of the Vangangella at Ngalangi there is a mound decorated with feathers and painted wooden posts (Plate XCII, Fig. 1). Childless women are placed on the mound which is near a river. They are covered with mud, after which the medicine-man sings songs and administers potions. The women go home and are made to sit on mounds in their kitchens. These mounds, which are made in rows, like earth heaped up after hoeing a trench, may be a symbol of successful agriculture and human fertility. 842 789

On looking into the subject of blood brotherhood I found that an exchange of blood between two males who swore mutual fidelity was at one time common. At the present day an exchange of blood is 608

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbunda FP13

positions on domes of rock. The first tomb examined was in Ganda (Plate LXXIV, Fig. 1). This tomb is carefully built up from pieces of granite detached from the rocks which serve as a base. Horns of animals are placed on the cairn which is further decorated by a stick bearing the tail of an animal. Plate XXXII, Fig. 1, shows a tomb of similar structure in the country of the Vasele. From one such tomb it was possible to detach a slab so that the interior could be seen. There were two male skeletons; one lay supine while the bones of the other were in disorder.

In a hunter's house of bows there are implements of deceased hunters, whose ceremonies centering in these relics have been described under the heading of hunting.

TRAINING OF MEDICINE-MEN

Training for the position of male or female magician (*ocimbanda*) is not carried out with formality ending in initiatory rites, neither is the position hereditary; but the boy or girl who wishes to become an *ocimbanda* must have "spirit in the head." This choice of children of peculiar neurotic temperament for the positions of medicine-men and medicine-women is widely distributed, as I have shown in some detail (Origins of Education, 1926, pp. 256–259).

Among the Ovimbundu there does not appear to be an intensifying of natural psychoses by seclusion, starvation, or beating. When a boy is sick, the medicine-man says, "You have a spirit who wants you to be *ocimbanda*." The medicine-man kills a dog, a goat, and four chickens, then the boy has to accompany his master, carrying his apparatus and obeying him in every way. The medicine-man says, "Your father was an *ocimbanda* and the spirit wants you." The female *ocimbanda* is called *cambula* by other women, and her services are preferred to those of the male *ocimbanda* in cases of difficult childbirth.

In Ngalangi I was informed that the Ovimbundu have great faith in the medicine-men of the Vangangella, a name vaguely applied by the Ovimbundu to several tribes of east-central Angola. An Ocimbundu will make a journey of several days in order to visit a distant medicine-man of another tribe.

FUNCTIONS OF MEDICINE-MEN

Magical practices are of two kinds, social and anti-social. The man who carries out divination, rain-making, healing the sick, and many other functions is *ocimbanda*, while the secret worker of evil, the witch or wizard, is *onganga*. In one village there may be several